

## Parts of a MARC Record: Variable Fields

The three parts of a MARC record are record structure, data content, and content designation. We are mainly going to focus on content designation, but I'll briefly cover the other two parts first.

Record structure includes the leader, which tells the computer how to process a record, and the record directory, which tells the computer what data is represented in the record (it's sort of a shorthand version of the record).

For the rest of the record, data content is what is put into the content designation. Data content is the information that goes into the MARC fields - title, publication information, subject headings, classification numbers, etc. Content designation is the actual fields – it tells the computer how to interpret the data content. The content designation is made up of two types of fields: variable fields and fixed fields. We're going to talk about variable fields first.

The variable fields are where you put the information to describe the item you are cataloging.

This information is identified by four components: tags, indicators, delimiters, and subfield codes.

Tags are three-digit numbers that tell the computer what kind of information is contained in a particular field. For example, a 245 tag indicates a title and statement responsibility field, as in the following example:

245 10 \$a Once upon a town : \$b the miracle of the North Platte Canteen / \$c Bob Greene.

Indicators are digits or blanks that give the computer instructions or information about the data contained in the field. The meanings of the indicators vary based on which field they are used for.

For example, in a 245 field, the indicators 10 mean that there is an author main entry and no nonfiling characters. (We'll talk more about these particular indicators in next week's session, so don't worry too much about their meanings now – just know that indicators are the two numbers after the tag.)

245 10 \$a Once upon a town : \$b the miracle of the North Platte Canteen / \$c Bob Greene.

The indicators are referred to as individual numbers. For the example above, we would say that the indicators are "one-oh", not "ten."

Delimiters are used to indicate where a new subfield, or smaller piece of information, begins. A number of different symbols can be used for delimiters, including \$, #, \_, and ≠. In this class, we will use the dollar sign (\$).

In the following example, there are three subfields, and they are all preceded by delimiters.

245 10 \$a Once upon a town : \$b the miracle of the North Platte Canteen / \$c Bob Greene.

The last components of variable fields are the subfield codes. These follow delimiters, and they tell the computer what specific type of information is included in a particular subfield.

For example: in a 245 field, subfield a is for the title proper; subfield b is for the remainder of title, and subfield c is for the statement of responsibility, as seen below:

245 10 \$a Once upon a town : \$b the miracle of the North Platte Canteen / \$c Bob Greene.

The handout on MARC tags (which can be found at the top of the course web page) lists the indicators and what they are used for, as well as the subfields. You'll notice NR next to some fields and subfields – this means that that field or subfield is non-repeatable (can't be used more than once.) The R means a field or subfield is repeatable.

The tags are grouped by hundreds, according to what type of fields they are.

- 0XX Control info., classification, codes, etc.
- 1XX Main entries
- 2XX Titles, edition, imprint
- 3XX Physical description, etc.
- 4XX Series statements
- 5XX Notes
- 6XX Subject access fields
- 7XX Added entries
- 8XX Series added entries, holdings, location, etc.
- 9XX Locally-defined uses

If you want to refer to a group of tags in the same 100, the shorthand for this is to say "1XX" for the 100 fields, for example.

Another important concept to understand when thinking about MARC tags is a concept called parallel content. Fields with parallel content are fields for which the last two digits are used consistently across fields to represent the same type of data. For example, a 100, 600, or 700 field is always a personal name.

- X00 Personal names
- X10 Corporate names
- X11 Meeting names
- X30 Uniform titles

- X40 Bibliographic titles

Subject heading fields also use the concept of parallel content, as follows:

- X50 Topical terms
- X51 Geographic terms